



Choosing the civilisational path of modern society in post-Soviet countries based on European values of quality of life

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Abstract. European values, such as democracy, human rights, freedom of speech, equality, and social justice, are considered key components of the quality of life. The study of the impact of these values on society and their acceptability in post-Soviet countries is relevant today and is of immense importance for their future development. The purpose of this study was to investigate the basic European values, their perception, and application in post-Soviet countries. Methods: analysis, comparison, generalisation. The study analysed the extent to which post-Soviet countries such as Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan adhere to European quality of life values. This analysis included indicators on freedom, democracy, human rights, equality, and other aspects. The study also examines aspects of attitudes towards European values in the post-Soviet countries, with a detailed consideration of Ukraine as a non-EU country and the Baltic states that are members of the European Union. This study showed a tendency to adhere to European values in Ukraine and a high indicator of the civilisation path of modern society in the countries that are members of the European Union. However, for Ukraine, the issue of adhering to European values of quality of life is complicated by the war, which as of 2023 is still ongoing in the country. The findings of this study may be useful for international organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and others in planning and implementing programmes for the development and support of democracy in post-Soviet countries

Keywords: war; democracy; socio-cultural aspects; changes in society

INTRODUCTION

The modern world is experiencing an era of great transformation and change. One of the key components of this global transformation is the desire of many countries to adopt European values of quality of life. This trend is becoming particularly relevant in countries that were once part of the Soviet Union and other post-Soviet formations. It is necessary to investigate the extent to which these countries accept and implement key European values. This study is aimed at investigating and analysing how the countries of the former Soviet bloc respond to the challenges of the modern world, as well as identifying

opportunities and obstacles for their further development based on European values of quality of life.

M. Vegesh & R. Kopolovets (2020) note that democratic transition is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires detailed analysis and understanding. Scholars point to the role of genetics in shaping democratic processes, where the historical context and specifics of each country are important. The authors note that each post-Soviet country has its own unique characteristics and development paths, but the role of civic engagement, citizen support, and the creation of effective institutions is

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equally important. The scholars address the complexity and variability of democratic transitions in the post-Soviet space, acknowledge the importance of investigating this phenomenon and emphasise the importance of understanding and contextualising the impact on the development of modern democracies in these countries. It is important to investigate this issue to clarify the overall picture of the state of modern society in the post-Soviet countries.

Ukrainian researcher M. Kunytsky (2020) notes that democracy is a complex and changing process for the countries of the former Soviet Union. One of the central issues, according to the researcher, is the influence of historical, cultural, and political factors on the development of democratic institutions in these countries. M. Kunytsky examines the main characteristic of the countries of the former USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) at the beginning of the reform era, which researchers often called the “problem of triple transition”. This problem, according to the researcher, requires the solution of three main tasks, namely the implementation of economic reforms, including the transition from a planned system to market relations; reforming the political system and establishing democratic institutions; changing the Soviet identity and creating new symbols of national identity among the population. It is necessary to study the aspects of the transition of post-Soviet countries to the values of modern European society more thoroughly. A.V. Panaro (2022) notes social and political aspects as key factors affecting equality in health and education in post-Soviet countries. The researcher addresses the fact that the impact of sociopolitical factors on access to quality services in these areas is particularly high in post-Soviet countries. The scientist notes that economic, social, and political aspects can affect the quality of life and opportunities of citizens regardless of their needs, but as a result of uneven distribution of resources. It is necessary to study these factors in greater detail to understand these areas in post-Soviet countries.

Analysing the axiological changes in modern Ukrainian society, A. Bihunyak (2022) emphasises the importance of understanding the civilisational vectors that influence the choice of values, which includes an analysis of the factors and events that influence Ukraine's choice of European values as a quality of life. According to the scholar, Ukrainian society is undergoing axiological changes under the influence of various contemporary events and factors, among which the political and socio-cultural situation is particularly important. The scientist is convinced that as a result of the influence of political changes, war, media, and information space, one can observe a change in the axiological direction of Ukrainian society. It is necessary to investigate how these axiological

changes affect the choice of Ukraine's civilisational path and its attitude towards European values.

M. Lazhykha (2022) notes that the establishment and development of Ukraine's civilisational choice is based on a range of key factors and aspects that influence the perception and implementation of European values of quality of life. These aspects, according to the scientist, form a single system that helps to understand how Ukraine chooses its civilisational path. The researcher argues that such aspects as the historical context, geopolitical situation, public consciousness, political reforms, internal and external factors combine to form a complex image that shapes Ukraine's civilisational choice. It is worthwhile to investigate the specific features of Ukraine's civilisational choice in the context of European values of quality of life. The purpose of this study was to investigate the main European values, such as democracy, human rights, equality, inclusiveness, social justice, and freedom, and their perception and implementation in post-Soviet countries.

▮ MATERIALS AND METHODS ▮

The following methods were used in this study: analysis, generalisation, and comparison, to investigate and understand the issue of choosing the civilisational path of modern society in the post-Soviet countries based on European values of quality of life. The study employed an analytical method to evaluate and investigate the extent to which post-Soviet countries have chosen European values of quality of life as part of their social development. The method of analysis helped to identify which countries demonstrate a higher level of compliance with European values, as well as to identify areas where improvements may be needed. The analysis made it possible to highlight aspects of how post-Soviet countries perceive and apply European values, and how this affects their quality of life and social development. The method of analysis helped to highlight the policies of various post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, as well as the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, in relation to European values of quality of life. This method was also used to explore how political, economic, cultural, and historical factors affect the ability of the above countries to adopt European quality of life standards. The analysis results helped to identify trends and features of the civilisation path of these countries in the context of European values, as well as to note the factors influencing this choice. This method outlined the understanding of the situation in the post-Soviet space in terms of compliance with European values of quality of life and helped to identify key aspects of this issue in the academic community.

Using the method of generalisation, this study highlighted the policies and practices of various post-Soviet countries in relation to European values of quality of life. This method made it possible to collect, systematise, and summarise information on the attitudes of these countries towards such values, as well as to establish general trends in development. The generalisation was based on the analysis of various aspects, such as political system, human rights, democracy, historical factors, and specific cultural features, which helped to identify common features and peculiarities of each country in the context of European values and their level of implementation. Using the method of generalisation, it was found that in times of war, adherence to European values can be difficult and require additional efforts to overcome difficulties. Using the method of comparison, the study analysed the attitude towards European values in the post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine, which is a representative of non-EU countries, and the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), which are members of the European Union. This method helped to identify differences and similarities in the attitudes of these countries towards European values. This method was also used to identify attitudes towards European values in countries experiencing conflicts and loss of territory, such as Ukraine, which is currently at war.

RESULTS

The implementation of European values in the regions of the post-Soviet space has considerable potential to improve the quality of life of citizens, create stability, and support democratic institutions. It is the choice of the civilisation path of modern society in post-Soviet countries based on European values of quality of life that is the central problem in Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. A prominent aspect is transformation of party systems in countries that were once part of the post-Soviet space. One of the key transformations in these countries was the change in party systems, which took place against the backdrop of profound social, economic, and political shifts. It is the diversity of ways and dynamics of transformation of party systems in different countries that play an important role and influence in political parties, their structures, and ideology. Another important aspect is the role of new political actors and social movements in creating new political realities. Specifically, the transformation of party systems is observed through the dynamics of party formation, development and dissolution, as well as changes in their political positions. The interaction between different parties and their voters determines the nature of

political transformation (Lebediuk, 2014). The European Union (EU) influences political, economic, and socio-cultural processes in the post-socialist space through its programmes, initiatives, and agreements with these countries. This influence covers various aspects such as political reforms, economic development, cultural exchange, and legislative harmonisation. The EU promotes democratisation, provides financial aid, facilitates the exchange of ideas and values, and promotes the harmonisation of legislation and standards, contributing to a better quality of life and stability in the region (Delcour, 2016).

In civilisational choice, the post-Soviet peoples of Central Asia are carefully guided by regional traditionalism and the strong influence of Islamic religious heritage. This religious aspect determines the modern ethno-cultural, socio-economic, and political development of peoples, and exposes them as objects of civilisational influence from China, India, Turkey, and Iran. The dynamics of Central Asia's civilisational choice can be traced within the framework of the interaction of three essential processes - traditionalisation, peripheralisation, and globalisation. They interact, influence each other, and bring the region closer together in a single civilisation. Today, there is an observed trend: the starting point in the civilisational development of post-Soviet Central Asian countries was the desire to find their own individual approach in the face of globalisation and cultural transformations (Tsapko, 2019). Public opinion and the dynamics of public sentiment play an important role in regime change in post-socialist societies. Public opinion can influence the development of new political movements and parties, as well as public support or opposition to the current regime. Notably, the role of mass protests, NGOs, and the media in shaping public opinion and influencing political decisions. Regime change in post-socialist societies is a complex element of state formation and depends on many factors, including the political elite, economic conditions, and external influences (Miller *et al.*, 2019).

Democratisation, as a process of transition to democratic forms of government and society, is a complex and multifaceted dynamic determined by various factors and conditions. First of all, the historical legacy influences the way society interprets and accepts democratic values. This includes cultural and historical traditions that can be favourable or hindering factors for democratisation. The economic situation also plays a significant role in the democratisation process. Economic stability and access to resources can stimulate a society's desire for democratic reform, while economic hardship can lead to social discontent and instability. Political will, as a positive force that supports democratic processes, is also of significant importance. Political leaders

and institutions should be prepared to implement democratic changes and reforms. Furthermore, external influences such as international support and pressure can play a role in facilitating or hindering democratisation. Finally, there are different models of democratisation that can be chosen by different countries depending on their specific circumstances and historical context. These models can range from parliamentary democracy to presidential democracy, from a federal system to a unitary system. The choice of democracy model can influence the way society and its institutions function (Ferraro Jr, 2021). All these factors and aspects are of immense importance for understanding the democratisation processes in the post-Soviet space and determine the different paths that countries choose in this process.

It is important to understand human rights in post-Soviet countries. In these formerly authoritarian societies, the transition to democracy and human rights protection is a challenging task. However, this process is necessary to ensure justice and freedom for all citizens. The implementation of democratic values and the protection of human rights requires not only legal reforms but also cultural and social changes in the minds of society. In post-Soviet countries, education and information freedom are essential for the development of democracy and the protection of human rights. Post-Soviet countries have been engaged in a complex process of separation of church from the state and have banned religious activity for many decades. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the isolation of religion has been lifted, and this has led to a variety of consequences in the religious, cultural, and social life of these countries. In many cases, this has led to the revival of religiosity and the return of the role of religion in society, which ensures freedom of religion for members of society. At the same time, it has also caused tensions

between religious and secular groups and sparked a debate about the role of religion in modern society. This process is indicative of the complex nature of the relationship between religion and the state in the post-Soviet context and reflects the important challenges these countries face in building new identities and civil societies after a period of atheistic regimes (Luehrmann, 2017). This process demonstrates an important aspect of freedom in modern post-Soviet society – the freedom to choose one's religious identity and to feel free to be members of religious communities that were previously oppressed.

Attention should also be paid to the issue of inclusive education in countries that were once part of the Soviet Union. Inclusive education, which involves teaching children with different disabilities together with healthy children in the same learning environment, is a vital component of modern educational systems. Specifically, inclusive education can contribute to the social inclusion and development of children with special needs, but there are problems and challenges that post-Soviet countries face in implementing inclusive education, including financial constraints, insufficient teacher training, and cultural stereotypes. When choosing the civilisational path of modern society, post-Soviet countries need to consider the development of inclusive education, as it contributes to the creation of a more just and inclusive society. For these countries, there is a need for changes in legislation, curricula, and approaches to education to ensure equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their characteristics (Makoell & Somerton, 2021). The attitude of countries towards European values can be quite complex and depends on many factors, including political, economic, cultural, and historical aspects. Below are examples of countries that generally seek to implement European values (Table 1).

Table 1. Post-Soviet countries' policies towards European values as of 2023

No.	Country	Policy on European values
1.	Ukraine	Ukraine is actively pursuing democratic reforms and striving to bring its policies closer to European standards. Physical attacks and online threats against human rights defenders, anti-corruption activists, environmentalists and independent journalists were widespread, and investigations into such incidents were not always effective. The European Union has set seven criteria that Ukraine must fulfil to continue its European integration. Two of these criteria have already been met, with Ukraine adopting the European standard of media legislation and implementing judicial reform. Furthermore, the fight against corruption is considered separately and requires a detailed plan for reforming law enforcement agencies, as well as the development of a strategy to combat money laundering schemes (The road to the EU..., 2023).
2.	Georgia	Georgia considers European values as key to its development and political orientation. The country has entered into an association with the European Union and actively cooperates with the West. Georgia is an exceptional case where geopolitical location and social identity pose numerous challenges to national and regional security. Georgia's desire to join the European community has always been resented by its neighbours, such as Iran and Turkey to the south and the Russian Federation to the north. Notably, the emotional attitude and socio-cultural environment in which Georgia's political landscape is formed significantly affect the country's foreign policy orientation (Georgia's strategic culture..., 2019).

Table 1. Continued

No.	Country	Policy on European values
3.	Moldova	Moldova is committed to the convergence of its standards with those of the European Union, and this is reflected in its decision to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union (Document of the European Union..., 2014). This demonstrates the country's determination to move closer to European values and its intention to promote political and economic cooperation with the EU.
4.	Lithuania	As a former part of the Soviet Union, this country has become a member of the European Union and is actively implementing European values. Lithuania's integration into the EU is an ongoing process that enables the country to become strong and modern, to develop continuously, and to ensure economic development and social well-being of its citizens. Furthermore, EU membership requires the country to uphold European values and encourages the implementation of structural reforms that benefit Lithuania (Ministry of Foreign Affairs..., 2016).
5.	Latvia	Latvia is also a former Soviet region that joined the European Union on 1 May 2004 and is currently working to implement European values. This accession to the EU was intended to strengthen European values by joining the community of Western democracies, as well as to promote Latvia's economic growth, prosperity, and security through cooperation with similarly minded countries (State Chancellery of Latvia, 2019).
6.	Estonia	For Estonians, the EU is perceived as an organisation that supports the values of peace and human rights, including individual freedoms, democracy, the rule of law, and solidarity. The fundamental principles of the EU, such as freedom of movement, joint crisis management, environmental protection, and climate change, are considered important to the country's residents (Republic of Estonia Government Office, 2022).
7.	Tajikistan	The EU and Tajikistan have established cooperation at the political and economic levels, following the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. However, there are challenges in the area of political freedom and repression of the opposition. The European Union supports Tajikistan in its efforts to implement international standards and norms established by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the field of human rights. In this context, it is important to strengthen the rule of law and improve the effectiveness of Tajikistan's legal system. Ensuring full compliance with these norms and standards contributes to strengthening human rights and improving their protection in the country (The European Union..., 2021).
8.	Kyrgyz Republic	Kyrgyz Republic has a history of democratic reforms and elections, but also faces political instability and human rights issues. The European Union expressed its dismay at the broad and apparently unjustified application by the Kyrgyz Republic of Article 330 of the Criminal Code, which deals with hatred and enmity, and the enforcement of the law on the dissemination of false information. The ban on access to media resources and targeted actions against journalists, bloggers and social media users who engage in investigative journalism or civic or political activities, as well as criticise the government, contradict Kyrgyz Republic's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Kyrgyz Republic..., 2022).
9.	Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan has been implementing reforms aimed at improving human rights and economic development, but there are challenges in the political sphere. For 25 years, joint work with the European Union under the Tempus programme has led to the successful implementation of more than 80 projects involving 55 higher education institutions of Uzbekistan and 71 higher education institutions from EU member states. Furthermore, the parties actively cooperate in the areas of human rights, democratisation, and civil society development (The Brussels Times, 2023).
10.	Armenia	Armenia faces complex issues related to human rights and freedom. These issues contain various aspects and problems that do not always correspond to the values and civilisation path of the European Union. The arbitrary deprivation of life, politically motivated killings, disappearances, torture, and other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment, as well as harsh physical conditions in prisons and detention centres, are serious human rights violations and are the subject of global increased attention regarding the situation in the country (U.S. Embassy in Armenia, 2022).
11.	Azerbaijan	The authoritarian regime of Azerbaijan maintains a high level of consolidation of power in the hands of President Ilham Aliyev, who has been ruling the country since 2003, and his family. At the same time, corruption is rampant in the country, and the political opposition has been considerably weakened by prolonged persecution. In recent years, the regime has significantly curtailed civil liberties, virtually eliminating the space for independent expression and activism. Notably, Azerbaijan achieved control over a third of Nagorno-Karabakh, including some adjacent land, during a week-long conflict with Armenia in 2020, but this came at a high price of more than 2,700 soldiers killed (Freedom House, 2022).
12.	Kazakhstan	The country has witnessed unlawful arrests and systematic restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly, resulting in detentions, fines, and short-term imprisonment of activists. Journalists continue to face harassment, physical attacks and prosecution for their professional activities. The Kazakh authorities continue to crack down on critics, including members of 'extremist' groups and participants in peaceful protests. President Tokayev acknowledges the problem of domestic violence and women's rights, but legislative protection on this issue is still insufficient. Kazakhstan lacks an anti-discrimination law and constitutional protections against discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation (Human Rights Watch, 2021a).

Table 1. Continued

No.	Country	Policy on European values
13.	Turkmenistan	Turkmenistan's authoritarian regime severely restricts access to information, limits media freedom and religious rights, and hinders independent monitoring. Independent activists, including those in exile, and their families face repression by the authorities. There have also been numerous cases of enforced disappearances, and the government continues to restrict the freedom of movement of citizens (Human Rights Watch, 2021b).
14.	Russia	New laws passed before the 2021 Russian elections gave the authorities more control. The authorities in the country have used these laws and other measures to persecute human rights defenders, journalists, citizens' groups, political opposition, and even academics. Among the new laws were amendments that expanded and strengthened the legislation on "foreign agents" and "undesirable foreign organisations" (Human Rights Watch, 2021c). Russia, acting as an aggressor, systematically violates human rights on the territory of Ukraine and actively wages an armed conflict on this territory. This situation has also led to serious human rights violations and deep humanitarian crises (What you need to know..., 2023).
15.	Belarus	The government of Belarus is actively suppressing the rights of its people. According to the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), 184 cases of arbitrary detentions, fines, use of excessive force and administrative arrests of journalists were recorded in the first half of 2021. Following the peaceful protests that emerged after the 2020 presidential election, the authorities intensified repression of human rights organisations. Members of the political opposition and their supporters who were detained before and after the elections are also being persecuted. Furthermore, Belarus is still the only country in Europe that applies the death penalty. Currently, at least one person sentenced to death, V. Syargel, stays on death row in Belarus (Human Rights Watch, 2021d). Currently, Belarus is actively supporting Russia in the context of the conflict in Ukraine.

Source: compiled by the author of this study

These examples show that countries' attitudes towards European values can vary and evolve according to internal and external factors. However, the Russian Federation and Belarus, in the context of the war in Ukraine, cannot be considered as post-Soviet countries that have chosen a civilisation path based on European values for the following reasons:

1. The annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine: Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 in violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Furthermore, there is an ongoing military conflict in eastern Ukraine, in which Russia's presence and support for militants is known. This is contrary to the principles of international law and respect for the sovereignty of a neighbouring state.

2. Restrictions on civil liberties and human rights: there are restrictions on civil liberties and human rights in Russia and Belarus. Both countries have been criticised for violating the rights of journalists, political opponents, and civil society activists. This contradicts European human rights standards.

3. Authoritarian regime in Belarus: an authoritarian regime continues to operate in Belarus, controlling the media, political opposition, and using repression against democratic protests and activists.

4. Accompanying information influence: both countries wage information warfare and disinformation about events in Ukraine and abroad, which violates the principles of press freedom and information independence.

Considering these facts, Russia and Belarus cannot be considered as countries that have chosen

a civilisation path based on European values, as their actions and policies contradict the basic principles and values recognised by European states and the international community. It is important to include Turkmenistan in this cohort, as it is a country marked not only by an authoritarian but also by a closed political regime and is one of the countries with one of the most repressive political governments in the world. Attention should be drawn to the importance of Ukraine's adoption of European values as one of the key steps in the development of modern Ukrainian society. Immediately after the Maidan events and the subsequent historical drama, Ukraine began the process of forming a new national identity. The Ukrainians who lost their lives on the Maidan have become symbols of heroism and devotion, just like the heroes of past generations, such as those who died at Kruty. The events that followed, including the "Heavenly Hundred", the escape of Yanukovich, the annexation of Crimea, the events in Donbas and the war, also contributed to the formation of Ukraine's new identity. New heroes have emerged - soldiers, volunteers, and civilians who have become symbols of the modern struggle. This process of identity formation includes an understanding of new norms, the limits of what is acceptable, and the division into "us" and "them". It is a kind of pantheon of martyrs, heroes, and those considered traitors in the contemporary Ukrainian consciousness (Kalakura & Yuriy, 2014). Below is a comparison of attitudes towards core European values between Ukraine (not a member of the European Union) and Lithuania (a member of the European Union) (Table 2).

Table 2. Attitudes towards European values in post-Soviet countries

No.	Values	Ukraine	Lithuania
1.	Freedom	Ukrainian politics is largely conducive to the development of freedom of speech and independent media. However, there are certain challenges and restrictions on freedom of speech and press in some segments of society. These challenges are related to certain legislative restrictions and the imposition of political influence on the work of journalists and media. Notably, freedom of speech is restricted in the occupied territories of Ukraine due to the non-transparent and unfree media situation, which creates other difficulties for journalists and citizens in expressing their opinions and reporting events.	It is protected, and the policy is conducive to this. In Lithuania, freedom of speech is an important element of a democratic society and is ranked highly in the press and expression freedom rankings. The constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed in this country.
2.	Democracy	Ukraine has begun to implement active reforms aimed at improving democratic institutions, including the judiciary, police, administrative services, etc. However, challenges and opposition from certain groups complicate the reform process. The war with Russia has led to changes in the composition and positions of political parties and groups, which has created some instability in the system.	Lithuania holds regular elections at various levels, from local to national. They are free and fair, allowing citizens to choose their representatives. Lithuania has a multi-party system that promotes a diversity of political views and debate on substantive issues. The media in Lithuania enjoy freedom of expression and independence from government interference. This is an important aspect of democracy.
3.	Human rights	Civil society in Ukraine is actively developing, and citizens are increasingly interested in taking part in public affairs. However, there are challenges in creating effective mechanisms for dialogue between the government and the public. Human rights violations, specifically in the occupied territories, as well as existing refugees and IDPs.	Lithuania guarantees freedom of speech, publication, and expression to its citizens. Journalists and citizens are entitled to express their views and opinions without censorship. Lithuania recognises the rights and freedoms of ethnic and national minorities, including the right to their own language and cultural development. Lithuanian law recognises the rights of sexual minorities and addresses the issue of protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation. People in prisons and other places of detention are entitled to be treated with dignity and to have their rights respected.
4.	Equality	Ukraine faces the problem of inequality and discrimination, especially against minorities, including ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ communities, and other socio-cultural groups. In the occupied territories of Ukraine, such as Crimea and certain regions in the east, there are serious challenges in ensuring equal conditions for all citizens. This includes human rights, access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure. The Ukrainian government and civil society organisations are actively working on programmes and initiatives to reduce inequality in the country.	In Lithuania, equality of citizens before the law and in society is an important aspect. Lithuanian legislation guarantees equal rights and obligations of all citizens before the law, regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, religion, age, or other characteristics.
5.	Inclusiveness	Efforts are being made to ensure inclusiveness, but challenges are still in access to education and social services. Ukraine is working to create an inclusive social atmosphere where everyone has equal access to education, work, and other areas of life, regardless of their physical or socio-cultural characteristics.	Lithuania has measures and programmes aimed at ensuring an inclusive society and equal opportunities for all citizens. The main aspects of inclusiveness in Lithuania include education, employment, and many others. These measures contribute to the creation of an inclusive society where all citizens can take part in all areas of life, regardless of their abilities or limitations.
6.	Social justice	The country faces problems with the even distribution of resources and opportunities, which leads to inequality in income and living standards between different socio-cultural groups. The war in Ukraine has led to significant economic losses and restrictions on the provision of social services. Many conflict-affected regions require special support.	Lithuania has a prominent level of equity in income and living standards between different socio-cultural groups. The distribution of social and economic resources is considered to be fairly even.

Table 2. Continued

No.	Values	Ukraine	Lithuania
7.	Government support	Efforts are underway to improve public services and support for citizens, including refugees and IDPs. For Ukraine, this issue is one of the key aspects, including the system of social benefits and support for low-income and vulnerable groups. Ukraine is focusing its efforts on improving this area and ensuring equal opportunities for all.	Lithuania has a well-developed system of social support for its citizens, including pensions, unemployment benefits, and aid to families and children. This system is aimed at ensuring the social security of citizens.

Source: compiled by the author of this study

It is important to bear in mind that the war with Russia and the occupation of part of Ukraine's territory have a serious impact on all aspects of Ukraine's social and political life, including adherence to European values. Such challenges may require additional efforts to achieve these goals. The post-Soviet countries need further reforms and efforts to achieve European values of quality of life. This process is complex and multifaceted and requires consideration of various aspects, including political, economic, cultural, historical, and social factors.

DISCUSSION

The study of the attitudes of post-Soviet countries towards European values is an important aspect in academic circles, as it helps to understand the processes and trends in the development of modern society, contributing to the improvement of the quality of life and stability in these regions. First of all, it is important to examine the general positions of scholars and scientists who have investigated the dynamics of the modern world and the possibilities of European values influencing its future to compare them with the results of this study.

S. van Wijk *et al.* (2020) compared two approaches to e-Government – democratic and technocratic – in post-Soviet countries. The democratic approach, according to scholars, focuses on the involvement of citizens in the governance process, while the technocratic approach is more focused on technological innovation and optimisation of the state apparatus. The authors point out that the choice of one of these approaches has a considerable impact on the development of public policy, the structure of government institutions, and the perception of public services by citizens. This is especially true in post-Soviet countries, where inherited authoritarianism can influence the choice of approach. Comparing the results of this study, it is important to understand the context of the development of the governance system in the post-Soviet states, which were greatly influenced by the development and reform of state structures by the totalitarian rule of the USSR, but it should be noted that these countries can achieve effective and citizen-oriented governance.

C. Kuruppu *et al.* (2023) point out that despite the current institutional framework in Ukraine aimed at ensuring citizen involvement in budgeting, there are aspects in practice that limit access to this process for certain groups of citizens. Specifically, scholars note the influence of the party system, bureaucratic processes and socio-cultural factors on the involvement of citizens in budget discussions and decision-making. The researchers argue that, despite some progress in implementing participatory budgeting, there are problems related to the elitism of this process, which may limit the active involvement of various civil society groups in Ukraine. Compared to the results of this study, the inequality observed in the distribution of funds is an urgent problem for Ukraine, but now, in the context of war, such aspects are not the only problematic areas on the civilisation path of modern Ukrainian society, which is aimed at attracting European values of quality of life. The scholar D. Rosca (2022) notes the current state of capitalism in Moldova after the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the main aspects that the researcher draws attention to is the confrontation between the oligarchic political economy and the concept of relationships. The researcher draws attention to how oligarchic structures have influenced the economic and political landscape of Moldova after its independence, creating economic inequality in society, and how this affects the development of capitalism in the country. Compared to this study, the difficulties and challenges faced by Moldova in shaping its capitalist system are inherent in most post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine, which are choosing the civilisation path of a modern society.

S.J. Collier (2011) address the social and political aspects of the development of post-Soviet countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The scholar focuses on various aspects of contemporary society, such as neoliberalism, social modernity, and biopolitics. The scholar is convinced that the complex transformations that took place in post-Soviet countries after the collapse of the USSR have substantially changed the social landscape of these regions and had a considerable impact on society and individuals. These transformations, according to the researcher, cover various aspects, including political,

economic, and socio-cultural aspects. Comparing the results of scientific studies, we should agree that complex transformations have taken place at many levels and continue to shape the further development of post-Soviet countries and their citizens.

M. Pelkmans (2014) draws attention to the aspect of religious freedom and repression in post-Soviet countries. The scholar emphasises that there is a paradoxical dynamic in these contexts, which is that, on the one hand, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of the atheist regime, more space was opened for belief and religious practice. However, on the other hand, the scholar notes that in some post-Soviet countries there is a certain level of religious repression and restrictions. According to the scientist, this may be due to various factors, such as political circumstances, power struggles, ethnic or religious conflicts, etc. In comparison with the results of this study, it is worth noting that the paradox of religious freedom and repression in (post-)Soviet contexts does exist, but states that position themselves as committed to European values of quality of life should ensure the protection of religious communities and believers from any form of discrimination or persecution based on religious affiliation.

R. Isaacs & A. Polese (2016) note that the process of nation-building and identity formation in the post-Soviet space requires innovative approaches and tools. Scholars emphasise that identity in these countries is complex and multifaceted, and therefore it is important to address issues related to the formation of national identities, the role of language, history, and politics in this process, and the ways in which people in the post-Soviet space perceive and construct their identity. Comparing these data, it can be argued that the post-Soviet space, including Ukraine, still needs reforms to follow European values and civilisation. Despite considerable progress in various aspects, such as democracy, human rights, and economic development, many post-Soviet countries face challenges and shortcomings.

S. Wilson (2012) notes that many post-socialist authoritarian states have mechanisms that support press freedom and journalism, and these mechanisms are often underestimated. The scholar points out that courts can act as defenders of the rights of journalists, ruling in favour of freedom of speech and access to information. According to the scientist, the police can protect journalists from physical violence and harassment. Journalists, in the author's opinion, can play the role of advocates for their profession and public debate by exposing violations of the freedom of press. It is important to understand that in comparing the results of this study, freedom of press in post-socialist authoritarian states can depend on many factors and involves

the joint efforts of the judiciary, police, and journalists. Many researchers and experts confirm that the desire for democracy, human rights and other European values is common to many post-Soviet countries. This underscores the importance of these values in shaping modern society. Therewith, research shows that there are differences in approaches and ways of achieving European values between countries. Some countries are actively implementing reforms, while others may face difficulties and resistance. In general, a comparison of the opinions of scholars with the results of this study emphasises the importance of investigating and understanding the attitude of post-Soviet countries towards European values of quality of life and their impact on modern society. Differences in approaches and contexts make this a multifaceted topic and important for further research and development of political and social development strategies in the region.

CONCLUSIONS

The post-Soviet countries have various levels and perceptions of European values of quality of life. This is reflected in various levels of democracy, human rights protection, equality, and social justice. The political landscape and reforms influence the adoption of European values. Countries that actively implement democratic reforms often achieve higher standards of values. The study analysed the extent to which the countries of the former Soviet bloc, including Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, meet European values of quality of life. In this analysis, the study considered indicators that include aspects of freedom, democracy, human rights, equality, and other key aspects. It also examined the attitudes of these countries to European values, considering a detailed analysis of Ukraine as a representative of a non-EU country and the Baltic states, which are full members of the European Union. The findings show that EU member states demonstrate a higher level of acceptance and implementation of European values compared to non-EU countries. However, for Ukraine, the issue of implementing European values in the quality of life is complicated by the ongoing war on its territory. This conflict affects many aspects of society and politics and may require special approaches and solutions to achieve the desired goals in the area of European quality of life values. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that further efforts are needed to strengthen democracy, human rights, and other European values in the region and highlight the importance of considering the specific context of each country when designing development strategies. Future researchers in the field of European values

and quality of life in post-Soviet countries should pay attention to tracking the dynamics of changes in attitudes towards European values of quality of life in these countries over time. Researchers should consider what events, policy reforms, and other factors influence these dynamics.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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Вибір цивілізаційного шляху сучасного суспільства пострадянських країн на ґрунті європейських цінностей якості життя

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Анотація. Європейські цінності, такі як демократія, права людини, свобода слова, рівність та соціальна справедливість, вважаються ключовими складовими якості життя. Дослідження впливу цих цінностей на суспільство і їхню прийнятність в пострадянських країнах є актуальним нині та має велике значення для їхнього майбутнього розвитку. Метою наукової роботи було дослідження основних європейських цінностей, їх сприйняття і застосування в пострадянських країнах. Методи: аналіз, порівняння, узагальнення. В результаті дослідження було проаналізовано те, наскільки пострадянські країни, такі як Україна, Грузія, Молдова, Балтійські держави (Литва, Латвія, Естонія), Таджикистан, Киргизстан, Узбекистан, Туркменістан, Вірменія, Азербайджан та Казахстан, дотримуються європейських цінностей якості життя. Цей аналіз включав показники щодо свободи, демократії, прав людини, рівності та інших аспектів. Також в дослідженні вивчено аспекти ставлення до європейських цінностей у країнах пострадянського простору на прикладі детального розгляду України, як країни, що не є членом Євросоюзу та Балтійські держави, які є членами Європейського Союзу. Таке дослідження показало тенденцію до притримання європейських цінностей в Україні й високий показник цивілізаційного шляху сучасного суспільства країн, що мають членство в Євросоюзі. Однак, слід зауважити, що для України питання притримування європейських цінностей якості життя ускладнюється війною, що станом на 2023 р. все ще триває на території країни. Результати дослідження можуть бути корисними для міжнародних організацій, таких як Організація Об'єднаних Націй, Європейський Союз й інші, у плануванні й реалізації програм розвитку та підтримки демократії в пострадянських країнах.

Ключові слова: війна; демократія; соціокультурні аспекти; зміни в суспільстві